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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Monday, April 15, 1935.

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Hello Folks: We are going to have a little chat about flowers this morning,---next Sunday will be Easter Sunday and all of our churches and many of our homes will be decorated with flowers that typify the resurrection and the return of all nature to active life. There are flowers for every occasion; we use flowers as messengers of good cheer and of sympathy; we use flowers to express our feelings of joy and of sorrow, but today I want to talk about the flowers of our everyday lives.

Every part of this old globe that we are living upon, except the snow bound and ice-capped polar regions has its flowers. Every section from the snow line near the tops of our loftiest peaks down to the few areas that are below sea level have a wealth of plants that supply us with blossoms at some time of the year. Our plant explorers and our seedsmen have brought together for our pleasure the plants of every clime and country, men of wealth have established great collections of flowering plants of various countries and from time to time our plant breeders give us new hybrids that far surpass the natural species.

The point I want to impress upon you today is that anyone can have flowers. Perhaps it may be only a few potted plants or a window box, perhaps it may be a small yard, or perhaps it may be a regular flower garden. In this day of striving to produce the food required by the family, of producing something to sell, there may be a tendency to neglect the flower garden and the cultivation of those plants that cheer and brighten our daily lives. The woman who works in her kitchen during the greater part of the day preparing the meals for the family, will have her pathway cheered and her burden of work lightened if she can look out of her window upon a garden of blossoms. The old idea was to place all of the ornamentals in the front of the home where the neighbors and those who were passing by could get the full benefit. The modern idea is to have shrubbery and a reasonable amount of decorative planting in the front and flanking the lawn but to have the real flower garden to one side or at the rear of the house where it can be most readily seen from the windows of the living rooms and the kitchen. In other words, the modern idea is to give the folks who live in the house 365 days a year the greatest benefit of the flower garden.

The second point for us to consider is to have in this home flower garden a variety of plants that will provide bloom at practically all seasons from early spring until late fall, and in the case of you southern folks, practically all the year round. Right now the daffodils are blooming profusely in my garden. In a few days we will have the Narcissus, then the tulips and the Lily of the Valley, then later the Madonna lilies and the Regal lilies.

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Early June will bring the roses and in the meantime the poppies, then the perennials such as foxglove, larkspur, hardy phlox, peonies, delphinium and and so on through the season with the gorgeous dahlias, the recurrent blooming of the everblooming roses and finally ending the outdoor season with a soft haze of chrysanthemums.

We use the annual flowering plants as fillers in our garden scheme and very largely for cut flowers. Speaking of cut flowers for use in the house I have found that it pays to have a cut-and-come-again flower garden. That idea is not original with me but it appeals to me for you know how you hesitate to cut your flowers where they make a good showing from the road or the house, but if you will plant a few rows of the various flowering plants that are suitable for cutting away back somewhere in the garden where you can work them with a cultivator you will not hesitate to cut them. Then there are certain annuals that are improved by having their flowers cut and a new crop of flowers will follow. There are the cut-and-come-again stocks, zinnias will branch out and form new flowers where their early flowers are cut, nasturtiums are improved by having their flowers picked, African Marigolds and Snapdragons will bloom all summer if the blossoms are cut and others allowed to form. There are any number of flowering plants that may be grown from seed and which will bloom during the first season and which will keep you supplied with cut flowers. One of the most satisfactory of the bulbous plants for cut flowers is the Gladiolus and by planting four or five varieties and making plantings at intervals during the early part of the season you may have an almost continuous supply of glad flowers for cutting during the summer. And here is a suggestion about cutting gladiolus spikes for use in the house,---- cut the spikes just when the first bloom is fully open and then if you will keep them in cold water and change the water often all of the blossoms or buds on the spikes will open for you. By cutting off a little piece of the lower part of the stems each day you keep the water channels open so that the flowers will remain fresh.

Now folks I did not intend to get into a discussion of cultural methods or the methods of taking care of the flowers. I just wanted to remind you today that it pays to have a flower garden and to have it located where you can get the greatest possible enjoyment out of it. I could spend hours discussing the old favorites, but get a few packets of seeds of your favorite flowers and have a flower garden this summer. If you do not have a place for a real flower garden then have some window boxes filled with petunias and enjoy them.

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